Cardio Oncology Symposium Africa

In spite of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the first cardio oncology conference on the

African continent prospered in Durban, South Africa, on March 7, 2020. Organized by ICOS

Executive Committee member, Dr. Trishun Singh, nearly 100 participants from across Africa

gathered for the genesis of cardio oncology training on this beautiful land mass of more

than 1.2 billion people.

A person standing next to a car

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Figure Dr. Sebastian Szmit, Dr. Trishun Singh, Dr. Steve Casselli

Dr. Singh has been involved in cardio oncology since 2015 and established the first cardio

oncology center in Africa at uMhlanga hospital in Durban. Along with his colleagues – Dr. Ria

David, the only medical oncologist in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and Ines Buccimazza, a

breast cancer surgeon – they established the Cardio Oncology Society of Southern Africa

(COSOSA) in 2019.

The conference began with a presentation from the President of ICOS, Dr. Daniel Lenihan,

by way of video conference. Dr. Lenihan set the stage for all who followed, presenting a

brief overview of the history of the cardio oncology movement. An outstanding example of

a multidisciplinary course, the program included presentations on imaging, radiotherapy,

bioethics, Amyloidosis, immunotherapies and cancer survivorship. Dr. Sebastian Szmit,

President of ICOS Poland, attending in person, presented a lecture on the “Cardio Oncology

A group of people sitting in front of a crowd

Description automatically generatedEffects of Renal Carcinoma and Lymphoma Treatment.” Dr. Szmit and Dr. Ria David moderated a quiz which provoked lively and fruitful debate among the delegates. Dr. Eric Harrison, Chairman of the Board for ICOS, closed the conference with another video conference addressing the issue of survivorship and heart health.

Figure Dr. Trishun Singh opens the conference

As is true in every country, South Africa faces unique challenges. There are only 200

oncologists and even fewer cardiologists in a country of nearly 60 million people. Thus, the

demands placed upon those involved in cardio oncology are extraordinary. In addition to

the limited number of physicians, 9-10% of the population suffers from diabetes, an

A person standing in front of a mirror posing for the camera

Description automatically generatedimportant comorbidity relative to some cancers and all heart disease. It is also estimated that more than 5 million people in South Africa live with HIV. These challenges, however, provide special opportunities for novel research and treatment programs to develop. As innovative approaches are created, new insights emerge that will be of benefit to other countries around the world.

Figure Dr. Sebastian Szmit

The organizers of COSOSA can be satisfied and proud of their launch. It will be difficult to

match the quality of their inaugural event, but it’s time to start preparing for the second

annual conference. Congratulations COSOSA!